FEATURES — EVENTS — 175TH ANNIVERSARY

Organ extravaganza celebrates Winchester's 175th and Bach's 340th

CHRIS STEVENS | CORRESPONDENT

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'Old Winchester,' as the Opus 50 organ of First Congregational Church is called, will be used in full force during the March 21 concert featuring four local organists. WINCHESTER NEWS STAFF PHOTO/CHRIS STEVENS

Call it serendipity that paved the way for the organ extravaganza [Subscribe]

First Congregational Church on March 21.

Rev. Jane Ring Frank said they chose the date for a concert some time ago when they were setting the Ripley Concert Series Calendar. Frank said because she works with the Cultural District board and the Cultural Council, she realized the date also coincided with the town's 175th anniversary.

Later she realized it's Johann Sebastian Bach's 340th birthday as well.

"So we decided to put all three things together into one concert," she said.

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First Congregational Church of Winchester organist Jeffrey Mead playing 'Winchester Old.' The performance will bookend the March 21 concert by opening and then closing the show. WINCHESTER NEWS STAFF PHOTO/CHRIS STEVENS

Though presented by The Ripley Chapel Series, the concert will t
in the sanctuary and feature what Frank calls four of the best org

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town.

It includes:

• Jeffrey Mead, FCC organist since 2005. He has collaborated with ensembles in New England and abroad.

• Jeremy S. Bruns, Parish of the Epiphany, has been named "a coolly aristocratic player" by The Dallas Morning News, and has been heard on the nationally syndicated radio show Pipedreams, BBC Radio, and the Pro Organo label.

• John Kramer, Winchester Unitarian Society, is a pianist, composer, and arranger and has performed widely throughout the U.S. He has written music for piano, organ, and choir and has received numerous commissions.

• Jane O'Keefe, retired organist from St. Mary's Parish, has served at various parishes in the Boston area, and previously, was the organist at the Cathedral of the Immaculate Conception in Burlington, Vt.

Frank said the concert will open and close with audience members joining in on a Bach hymn and in between some of what will be performed includes Bach's Passacaglia and Fugue in C Minor, BWV 582 and Bach's Organ Sonata No.5 in C major, BWV 529, along with other Bach-influenced works, including Mendelssohn and Buxtehude.

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Because the four organists also played a concert together about seven years ago, when FCC's organ was renovated, Frank said all the mu
are familiar with the 1968 Opus 50 that's referred to as "Winchest

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Mead said it's called that for two reasons: one because there is a hymn by the same name and two because C.B. Fisk, who created the organ, built another one a few years later down the street at the Episcopal church "so that is Winchester new."

Frank described the organ as not a flashy, movie-style instrument, but rather "a jewel of a baroque organ. But Mead argued that Fisk was hitting his stride when he built the Opus 50.

"It might be limited in sound, but it has plenty of opportunity to build textures and colors," Frank said.

"It does have great color and what it does, it does really well," Mead added.

It might not be movie flashy, but the impressive instrument is a stately presence with pipes as big and tall as a sturdy birch and as small as a ring finger and the sound is, well, heavenly.

"Organ building is about problem solving and he did a remarkable job solving this problem," Mead said.

It seems that Fisk wanted the organ in the gallery at the rear of the sanctuary, but over his objections, it was built in the chancel at the front of the sanctuary. Mead said in the end, it didn't matter because the sound was amazing and the organ excels at everything it should, whether it's accompanying a choir, a singer or playing solo.

"This became the seed for the concert," Frank said. "We have this lovely instrument and a wonderful organist."

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First Congregational Church of Winchester organist Jeffrey Mead playing 'Winchester Old.' WINCHESTER NEWS STAFF PHOTO/CHRIS STEVENS

Tickets for the concert are $20 each for general admission, $5 for students for both the live performance and live-streamed. Click here to purchase tickets.

Frank said sales have been brisk and they are expecting a good turnout for the event.

"All the performers are performing for free so all proceeds will go to the Immigration Support Alliance (ISA)," Frank said. "We have low expenses and with the anniversary of the town it makes sense to donate the proceeds."

ISA is a network of volunteers that welcomes and assists newly a individuals and families as they gain footholds in our community, Frank

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said.

For more information about the show, contact Frank, minister of Worship and the Arts at 857-919-0983 or at jane@fcc-winchester.org.

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The following was submitted by the Network for Social Justice: The Winchester community came together last week at the Griffin Museum of Photography for the inaugural Black History and Culture Celebration, an evening filled with music, student creativity, and powerful messages about equity, unity, and the of Black

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Winchester residents share more snow photos

Well, Winchester, we made it through the weekend with only a coating of snow that amounted to nothing on Sunday afternoon. But during the Feb. 22-23 blizzard, Winchester News once again asked residents to send their snow photos. And here is what we received! Solmaz Amirnazmi said her daughters and

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Winchester Community Music School set to expand, upgrade

The big events in Winchester Community Music School always take place in Nichols Performance Hall. With the school and its performances' growing in popularity, the hall and many of its amenities are due for an upgrade. The performance hall is one of the main areas that the school seeks to

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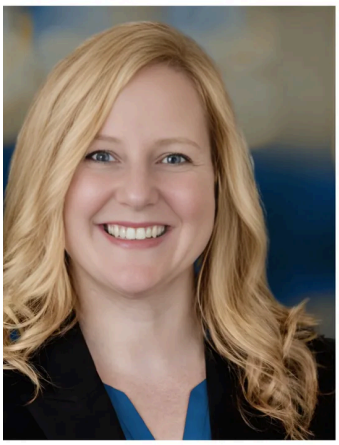

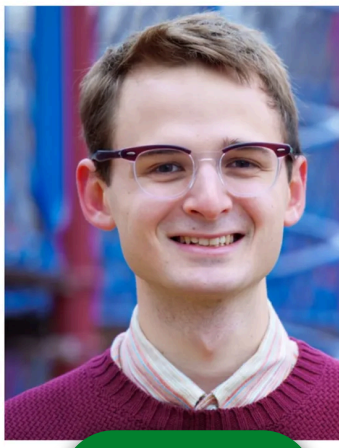

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Celebrate Women's History Month with Girls Leading Change

The following was submitted by the Network for Social Justice: To mark Women's History Month and International Women's Day in 2026, the Network for Social Justice is collaborating with club leaders from Winchester High School and members of the Community Health team from La Colaborativa in Chelsea and

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Winchester School Committee candidates bring contrasting backgrounds to Thursday forum

Two candidates for Winchester's School Committee will face voters at a forum as the district navigates a new literacy curriculum, budget pressures and questions about student mental health. Heather von Mering and John Bellaire are competing for an open seat on the School Committee, which oversees a budget von

WILL DOWD | STAFF WRITER

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Ripley Chapel in Winchester presents 'Syldason: You Are Welcome Here'

The following was submitted by the Ripley Chapel at First Congregational Church: On Friday, March 13, beginning at 7:30 p.m., live in-person and live streamed from the stunning Ripley Chapel at First Congregational Church, Winchester, 21 Church St., join in with Syldason, a duo concert featuring Sylvie Zakarian,

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